



PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT: AN OVERVIEW

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Introduction:

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are three tier structures to ensure the Rural Development and people's participation in local governance. By 73rd constitutional amendment, Indian government empowered the PRIs for making their own development plan, levy taxes, running educational institutions, hospitals, making roads, bridges, culverts etc. PRIs can decide the local priorities and prepare the development plan. Finance commission directly send money to PRIs to ensure best utilization of funds for local development. PRIs ensure the connectivity, education, health, forest, drinking water, sewerage; mining etc. works in local areas. In addition to that, PRIs are responsible for carrying out the central schemes viz. Housing, MNREGA, NRHM, PMAY, SBM, NRLM etc. These are the programmes being implemented by the PRIs which are of help in providing pakka houses for the deserving families, employment to the unskilled labourer and asset creation under NREGA, hygiene and sanitation for individuals as well as the community under SBM, skill development of the rural youth under NRLM, etc.

Evolution of PRIs:

Rural development has been massively a government supported process rather than the people-led process in India. To formulate and implement rural development programmes an appropriate institutional structure is required. This need was met by the establishment of Panchayat Raj Institution (PRIs) in India. Further, the PRIs, being local self-governing bodies ensure, the opportunity for people's participation and involvement in the formulation and implementation of rural development programmes. Thus, the PRIs are entrusted with the task of promoting rural development in India. Since Independence greater emphasis has been laid on the social, economic and planning policy of our country for creating an appropriate rural, economic and social infrastructure and to promote an overall development. The planning policy of our country accorded the highest priority to agriculture and rural development. The measures envisaged from the first five-year plan had considerable bearing for the growth of rural economy. The first five-year plan laid down that "development of agriculture, based on the utilization of man power resources of the countryside and the maximum use of local resources, holds a key to the rapid development of the country".

In the words of Committee on Plan Projects, "so long as we do not discover or create a representative and democratic institution which will supply the local interest, supervision and care necessary to ensure that expenditure of money upon local objects conforms with the needs and wishes of the locality, invest it with never be able to evoke local interest and excite local initiative in the field of development" and the team recommended a three-tier model of Panchayat Raj to serve as instrument of rural development in India (Committee on Plan Projects Report 1957). Panchayats have been in existence for a long period. The present set-up clearly marks itself off from the past in respect of powers, functions and financial resources. The four main aspects of the present system are: (i) democratization of the constitution and universal establishment of Panchayats. (ii) transfer of more powers from the state to these bodies, (iii) expansion of the scope of and transfer of more functions to the Panchayats in regard to agriculture and allied activities, health and welfare and education and (iv) strengthening of the resource position of these bodies. Rural development is generally conceived as a multi-sectoral activity which includes, besides agricultural development, rural industries, the establishment or improvement of social overhead facilities or infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, roads, communication, water supply, markets, welfare sources, improved nutrition, literacy, adult education etc. The primary objective of rural development is to enrich the quality of the rural masses, particularly the poorer and the weaker sections. The implementation of democratic decentralization through the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) was meant to give an opportunity for local initiative and participation in the developmental activities.

According to Gandhiji, "Indian independence must begin at the bottom. Every village should be a republic or a Panchayat having full powers. The greater the power of Panchayats, the better it is for the people". To him "Swaraj" signified the vesting of the ultimate authority in the peasant and the labourer. True democracy cannot be worked from below by the people of every village. In this light, The Constitution 73rd (Amendment) Act, 1992 has provided a new dimension to

the concept of Panchayati Raj. In other words, the concept of people's participation should be considered as an ideological commitment and, therefore, legislative and structural measures should be initiated to give legitimacy to people's participation. The Panchayati Raj Institutions are statutorily elected bodies at the village, Block and District levels with powers of local government. The main objective of Panchayati Raj is to strengthen the base of democracy at the grass roots and to enable the people of each village to achieve intensive and continuous development in the interests of the entire panchayat, irrespective of caste, colour, class, and creed. Panchayati Raj or local self-government is an exercise in democratic decentralization of administrative authority. The system is based on the following principles.

- i. There should be a three-tier structure of local self-governing bodies from village to district level, with an organic link from the lower to the higher ones.
- ii. There should be a genuine transfer of power and responsibility to these bodies.
- iii. Adequate financial resource should be transferred to these bodies to enable them to discharge their responsibility.
- iv. All development programmes at these levels should be channeled through these bodies.
- v. The system evolved should be such as to facilitate further decentralization of power and responsibility in the future.

The future of the country really depends upon effective Panchayati Raj and people's participation or co-operation. It is the only effective instrument which can put speed and substance in our planning process and ensure the most effective use of the country's resources for productivity. In that lies the future of both democracy and development of the economy as well as of the people. In the years to come, Panchayati Raj will be a catalytic agent of integrated development of tribal mass in rural areas.

Rural Development Means?

Development is a broad concept which encompasses every aspect of human life. It is essentially an activity carried out by state involving policy formulation and execution on the part of the government for the benefit of society. Rural development, on the other hand, means an overall development of rural areas in social, economic, political and cultural spheres so that people could lead a pleasant life. It is a broad, inclusive term which takes in its consideration the socio-economic and political development of the rural areas. It includes measures to strengthen the democratic structure of society through the Panchayati Raj Institutions as well as measures to improve the rural infrastructure, improve income of rural households and delivery systems pertaining to education, health and safety mechanisms.

The rural development programmes propose to reduce the poverty and unemployment, to improve the health and educational status and to fulfil the basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing of the rural population. For this to realize, Government of India launched some developmental schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), etc. All these schemes are intended to lessen the gap between rural and urban populace which would help ease imbalances and speed up the development process. The term 'Rural Development' is of focal interest and is widely acclaimed in both the developed and the developing countries of the world.

Rural Developmental Programmes:

Both the Central and State Government are launching different different schemes/programmes for the Rural Development. These can be discussed

below:

District Decentralized Planning Fund:

The concept of Decentralized Planning had been introduced recently. The District Planning & Development Boards have full powers to efficiently and cost-effectively implement the district level schemes and also identify the areas and groups of people at the Grassroots level, which need special attention for equitable socio-economic growth. The District Planning & Development Boards are competent to select executing agencies for executing the works with decentralized funds at their own convenience. In consonance with the 73rd amendment to the Constitution, efforts are being made to transfer the fund, function and functionality to the Panchayati Raj Institutions by constituting District Planning Committees.

MLA Local Area Development Scheme (MLALADS):

This scheme enables each Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) to undertake small developmental works in his/her constituency through the allocated funds. The works recommended under this scheme are conforming to the general pattern of programmes and projects being implemented by the local bodies. These works are sanctioned and implemented in the same manner as the other works. Whenever requires, technical and administrative sanctions are provided after following the departmental procedures applicable to the local bodies and other government departments. The funds under this scheme are used in the construction of school buildings, roads, bridges, drains and toilets.

MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS):

Under this scheme, funds amounting to Rs.5 crore per year are placed at the disposal of a Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha) of a Parliamentary Constituency. The scheme is implemented on the guidelines received under the scheme from the Government of India. The funds are released for the works recommended by the concerned M.P. and the works are executed by the Line Departments/Implementing Agencies like Panchayati Raj, BDPOs, etc.

For Fire Damage: This scheme is to meet up all relief cases affected by fire accidents and other natural calamities. All the relief cases affected by man-made & natural calamities are required to report within 24 hours of incident for immediate relief. All relief cases are scrutinized under the chairmanship of Circle Officer in the circle level and submitted to Deputy Commissioner at district level. In case of fire accident, report in form of WT message should reach the district authorities within 24 hrs of incident for immediate relief.

For Crop damage: Beneficiaries under this scheme are scrutinized once a year by circle level relief committee headed by Circle Officer to provide relief to the affected families.

For Flood Damage: All Flood Damage Report (FDR) will be entertained in the district level through discretionary powers of deputy commissioner. Basically, this relief scheme depends on financial position.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the renamed scheme of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which was enacted by the Parliament as an Act No. 42 of 2005. The Act provides a guarantee for rural employment to households whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work not less than 100 days in a financial year in accordance with the scheme made under the Act.

Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY):

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) is a centrally sponsored scheme funded on cost-sharing basis between the Government of India and State Government in the ratio of 75:25. Under this scheme Rs. 120, 000/- are provided for construction of a House, to a family living Below Poverty Line in rural areas in lump sum.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY):

Rural road connectivity is not only a key component of rural development by promoting access to economic and social services and thereby generating increased agricultural incomes and productive employment opportunities in India, it is also a key ingredient to ensure sustainable poverty reduction. The primary objective of the PMGSY is to provide connectivity, by way of an All-weather Road (with necessary culverts and crossdrainage structures, which is operable throughout the year), to the eligible unconnected Habitations in the rural areas.

Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY):

The families living Below the Poverty Line belonging to rural areas are assisted under this programme— individually as well as in Groups (Self Help Group). Funds to be received under the scheme are shared by Centre and State Government in the ratio of 75:25 ratios. Assistance is provided for income generating activities. After 6 months of the formation of a Self Help Group Rs.10,000/- is provided as Revolving Fund and after completion of 2nd grading (one year) subsidy @ 50% subject to a maximum of Rs.125000/- is provided to a Self Help Group.

Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY):

Two erstwhile schemes namely EAS & JRY were reviewed and re-casted as "Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana" (SGRY) in 2001. This is a centrally sponsored Wage Employment Scheme, Implementation of which will be done through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The scheme has the objectives: (i) to provide additional wage employment in rural areas, (ii) to provide food security, (iii) to create durable community, social and economic infrastructure in rural areas, (iv) special emphasis to provide Wage Employment to: a. Women; b. Scheduled caste; c. Scheduled Tribes; and d. Parents of children withdrawn from hazardous occupations.

National Rural Health Mission (NRHM):

The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) is an initiative undertaken by the government of India to address the health needs of underserved rural areas. Founded in April 2005 by the former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The thrust of the mission is on establishing a fully functional, community owned, decentralized health delivery system with inter-sectoral convergence at all levels, to ensure simultaneous action on a wide range of determinants of health such as water, sanitation, education, nutrition, social and gender equality.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana:

National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in June 2011. Aided in part through investment support by the World Bank, the Mission aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services. NRLM set out with an agenda to cover 7 Crore rural poor households, across 600 districts, 6000 blocks, 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats and 6 lakh villages in the country through self-managed Self Help Groups (SHGs) and federated institutions and support them for livelihoods collectives in a period of 8-10 years.

In addition, the poor would be facilitated to achieve increased access to rights, entitlements and public services, diversified risk and better social indicators of empowerment. DAY-NRLM believes in harnessing the innate capabilities of the poor and complements them with capacities (information, knowledge, skills, tools, finance and collectivization) to participate in the growing economy of the country. In November 2015, the program was renamed Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM).

Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana:

Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) is a village development project launched by Government of India in October 2014, under which each Member of Parliament will take the responsibility of developing physical and institutional infrastructure in three villages by 2019. The Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAANJHI) was launched on on 11th October, 2014.

The main objectives of SAGY are:

1. To trigger processes which lead to holistic development of the identified Gram Panchayats
2. To substantially improve the standard of living and quality of life of all sections of the population through
 - Improved basic amenities
 - Higher productivity
 - Enhanced human development
 - Better livelihood opportunities
 - Reduced disparities
 - Access to rights and entitlements
 - Wider social mobilization
 - Enriched social capital
3. To generate models of local level development and effective local governance which can motivate and inspire neighbouring Gram Panchayats to learn and adapt
4. To nurture the identified Adarsh Grams as schools of local development to train other Gram Panchayats.

Conclusion:

To fulfil the ambition of M.K.Gandhi our government both Centre and State are taking new initiatives to make rural people socially and economically strong and empower. People's participation in rural development is necessary. The successful working of all the schemes can be carried only through the people's participation and with efficient leadership.

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